

Message Text

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43

ACTION AF-18

INFO OCT-01 EUR-25 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03

INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-07 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01 SP-03

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FM AMEMBASSY YAOUNDE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3412

INFO AMEMBASSY LAGOS

AMEMBASSY LIBREVILLE

AMEMBASSY MADRID

AMEMBASSY NDJAMENA

USMISSION USUN

AMCONSUL DOUALA

C O N F I D E N T I A L YAOUNDE 1806

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, MILI, EK, GB

SUBJECT: GOEG SILENCE ON DISPUTED ISLANDS PUZZLES GABONESE ENVOY

REF: YAOUNDE 1783

1. DURING THE COURSE OF LONG CONVERSATION WITH GABONESE AMBASSADOR TO EQUATORIAL GUINEA PASCAL NDOUNA BEPENAJI, FRIEDMAN AND CLARKE WERE TOLD THAT ON AN UNDISCLOSED DATE IN MARCH 1974, GABONESE MILITARY HEADQUARTERS ISSUED AN ORDER FORBIDDING ALL FOREIGN VESSELS FROM APPROACHING THE VARIOUS ISLANDS WHOSE OWNERSHIP HAS BEEN DISPUTED BETWEEN GABON AND EQUATORIAL GUINEA. THIS WAS REPORTED IN MAGAZINE, WEST AFRICA. BECAUSE PRESIDENT MACIAS HAD IN THE PAST RAPIDLY CALLED IN THE GABONESE REPRESENTATIVE WHENEVER ANY MATTER OF THE DISPUTED ISLANDS WAS BROUGHT UP, THE GABONESE EXPECTED AN IMMEDIATE CALL FROM MACIAS. NONE HAD YET COME, AND THE GABONESE AMBASSADOR COULD OFFER NO EXPLANATION.

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2. COMMENT: WE CAN HYPOTHESIZE RPT HYPOTHESIZE THAT

THE GABONESE MILITARY ORDER MAY HAVE STEMMED FROM CONCERN OVER A VOYAGE--ACTUAL OR POTENTIAL--INTO THE DISPUTED WATERS BY THE "PRESIDENTE MACIAS NGUEMA", THE 3700 MT MERCHANT VESSEL PRESENTED TO THE GOEG BY CHINA IN DECEMBER 1973. PERHAPS LIBREVILLE CAN SHED FURTHER LIGHT ON SUBJECT.

3. ACCORDING TO ANOTHER STORY CIRCULATING AMONG THE DIPLO-MATIC COMMUNITY IN MALABO, THE VISITING GOVERNMENT MERCHANT VESSEL CALLED ON CORISCO WHERE NO OTHER REGULAR SHIP HAD CALLED FOR ONE YEAR, AND FOUND OVER 150 OF THE ISLAND'S 1100 INHABITANTS DEAD OF CHOLERA. NO PHYSICIAN WAS ABOARD THE VESSEL (SOME SOURCES SUGGEST DEGREE OF DOUBT WHETHER DEATHS WERE DUE TO CHOLERA OR STARVATION) AND THERE IS NO INDICATION OF ANY GOEG RESPONSE TO THE DISASTER. THE GABONESE FELT REASON FOR CONCERN OVER THE POSSIBILITY OF CHOLERA BEING SPREAD BY NATIVE FISHERMEN LANDING IN GABON.
MOORE

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